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A 7. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the conductor is provided comprising a capping layer, which capping layer provides the top surface portion of the conductor.

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A 9. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the dielectric layer is applied by depositing a dielectric material having a dielectric constant lower than that of silicon oxide.

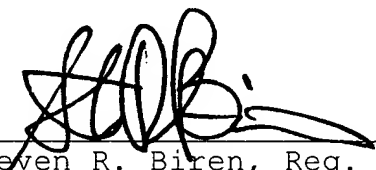
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A 11. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the via is filled by depositing a conductive layer, which conductive layer comprises a metal selected from a group comprising aluminum, copper and tungsten.

REMARKS

The claims have been amended in order to reformat the claims to delete all multiple dependencies prior to calculation of the filing fee and place the instant application in standard U.S. format.

Entry of this amendment prior to calculating the filing fee is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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APPENDIX

5. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 2, ~~3 or 4~~, characterized in that the etch stop layer is applied to the top surface portion and the sidewall portions of the conductor as well as to portions of the semiconductor substrate which are not covered by the conductor.

6. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, characterized in that the conductor is provided while comprised at least in part of a material selected from a group comprising aluminum, copper and tungsten.

7. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, characterized in that the conductor is provided comprising a capping layer, which capping layer provides the top surface portion of the conductor.

9. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, characterized in that the dielectric layer is applied by depositing a dielectric material having a dielectric constant lower than that of silicon oxide.

11. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, characterized in that the via is filled by depositing a conductive layer, which conductive layer comprises a metal selected from a group comprising aluminum, copper and tungsten.